8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

1539 ONCE in the days of the Ottomans there lived in Baghdad a man of an ancient and noble family named Sheikh Mizeil el Qurnachi, and he lived [651 in a great house by the banks of the Tigris. Yet his estates 731] had been reduced by the taxation and oppression of the Ottomans, and his crops spoiled by locust and by flood until he was reduced to poverty.

So he lived in his house with his only daughter without a single servant or a single slave, nor was there any furniture or silver left in his house, for he had sold all to buy [432] food. Yet the house he could not sell, for it would be shameful for him to do so, since it was the house of his ancestors.

The name of his daughter was Nura. She was in the [203] seventeenth year of her life, yet none had asked for her in marriage, for since there were no servant girls to gossip about her beauty, the boys of great and noble families had not even heard of her. Else surely their sleep would have been troubled by her description, for her hair was as black as the Shatt el Arab on a clear winter's night, and her eyes were as the stars which glisten in its waters, her skin was as golden as the desert sand when tinged by the first rosy red rays of dawn, her back was as supple as the reeds before the wind, and her thighs and breasts had the softness of the feather quilt which allures the tired traveller.

So one day Nura went to her father and she said to him: O my beloved father, my state is thus and thus. Shall I be forever a cook in your household or shall I be the mother of noble sons? And Sheikh Mizeil grieved much at the words of his daughter, and his heart was sad. And on the nights of the full moon Nura would go out on the roof of their great house, and speak to the moon and ask the question:

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

TALES FROM THE ARAB TRIBES

1. The Story of Hajji Ali, the Great Sultan and his Son, the Amir Khayyun

The Maadan. Page 12, Line 17. 'The Maadan shall bring milk.'

The Maadan are in the main a tribe of poor families, living in scattered communities on the shores of that great area of marsh and lake which lies between the Tigris and the Euphrates before the two rivers finally join to form the Shatt el Arab. Maadan villages often acknowledge the authority of sheikhs of neighbouring tribes, and they have no great tradition of their own. Their chief source of wealth was in the past their large herds of water buffaloes, their income being derived from the sale of milk and its products, lebn (a kind of curd), and clarified cooking butter. The sale of milk is regarded as shameful by most tribes, though of course all produce enough for their own requirements. In consequence the Maadan, with their trade in milk and hides, are looked down on by the tribes, and they are said to be lacking in honour. However in the last twenty-five years the Maadan have acquired large areas of agricultural land, and they are sharing fully in the increasing wealth of South Iraq. As for their honour, I remember a fight three years ago which took place between two Maadan subsections not far from Qarmat Ali, just outside Basra. This was a fight for a woman's honour in the best tribal tradition in which nothing was lacking either in the number of rounds of ammunition expended or in the casualties to bring it fully up to the standard of the great tribes in these matters.

2. A Story Concerning the Ignorance of Slaves

Slaves.

'Abd, or slave, is a slang expression in South Iraq for a Negro, and does not now indicate an actual slave. Slavery continued in Iraq to the end of Ottoman rule, 83 years after its abolition in the British Empire. In this story, therefore, the word would refer to actual slaves, and I have so translated it. The word 'habshi' (lit. 'Abyssinian') is little used in South Iraq, a Negro being referred to as a 'sambo' or 'abd'.

Crocodile. Page 20, Line 3. 'In that river was a crocodile.'

The word used was 'timsah', or crocodile, of which of course there are none in Iraq. I do not know if this indicates that this story